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Roh Claims 'New Chapter' For S. Korea

*Successful Games
Said to Boost Image*

By Peter Maass
Special to The Washington Post

SEOUL, Oct. 4—President Roh Tae Woo, seeking to capitalize on South Korea's success in staging the Olympics, said today the country is ready to become a global economic and political power.

"We have now acquired the confidence that we can do anything to which we put our mind," an exuberant Roh told the National Assembly in his first political speech since the Games ended Sunday.

Roh described the Seoul Olympics as "outshining any previous Olympics held in the developed world. Now we are opening a new chapter of history in which Korea should achieve both unification and prosperity and emerge as a major player on the world scene in the 21st century," he said.

Much of the speech focused on the impetus Roh believes the Olympics will provide in furthering Seoul's foreign policy goals, especially a rapprochement with North Korea and its key allies, China and the Soviet Union.

Roh did not break new ground in outlining his foreign policy, but he reemphasized his plans for normalizing relations with the communist bloc and ending the politics of hostility that have dominated North-South ties since the Korean War ended in 1953.

[Roh will dramatize his new diplomacy by flying to New York to address the U.N. General Assembly Oct. 18 on his conciliatory policies toward North Korea, Washington Post staff writer Don Oberdorfer reported.

[Roh's address and a parallel speech a day or two later by a North Korean representative will mark the first formal addresses to the General Assembly by either Korean government. Both are observ-

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ers rather than full members of the world organization.

[U.S. Undersecretary of State Michael H. Armacost was in Seoul Tuesday to discuss U.S. gestures toward North Korea that could be taken to encourage the emerging North-South diplomacy, State Department sources said.

[But any U.S. moves, such as resuming informal discussions with North Korean diplomats, probably would wait until after Roh's U.N. speech, the sources said.]

The Seoul government hopes that the Olympics, by helping to cement South Korea's standing in the world, will persuade North Korea to halt the decades-old cross-border rivalry, conceding defeat to the South.

Officials also would like to see the diplomatic inroads they are making with North Korea's allies, such as the relatively recent expansion in contacts with Moscow and Beijing, drive the point home. With the battle for legitimacy ended, the two sides then could begin mending fences, according to the government theory.

Completion of the Olympics marks the start of a test of the government's policy. Stalled talks with North Korea, broken off shortly before the Games began, are to resume this month. It is unclear, however, whether the talks will resume or where they might lead.

Roh offered again in today's speech to meet with North Korean leader Kim Il Sung in Pyongyang.

Public expectations are high in the South that ties with Pyongyang might improve. The frozen state of relations is widely regarded in Seoul as unnatural, and many diplomats say Roh could face a backlash if North-South relations remain unchanged despite his initiatives.

Roh promised during last year's presidential campaign to submit to a post-Olympics evaluation by the public, presumably through a referendum or vote of confidence in the National Assembly.

Roh reaffirmed today that he intends to carry out "an assessment without fail through methods acceptable to the public." But he stopped short of saying when or how this will be done.

Roh sidestepped another key issue facing his young government: How to deal with charges of corruption leveled against ex-president Chun Doo Hwan, who was Roh's mentor and classmate at the Korea Military Academy. Roh's ruling party has tried to fend off opposition-led corruption investigations, but is losing its already weak base of public support because of its perceived defense of the unpopular Chun.

Without mentioning Chun's name, Roh warned that "political retaliation" would impede the development of democracy. He said, however, that "if conspicuously bad things were done in the past, they should be brought to light."